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ABSTRACT

This guide provides information on the Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners project that is designed to encourage a love of reading in children and to increase communication between the home and school. Section A is an overview of the four phases of the project that are initiated by an adult literacy animator (facilitator) in a primary school: Phase I, negotiating with the schools; Phase II, developing the project with the teacher--defining roles, planning the project; Phase III, implementing the project--announcing it to the class, the parent meeting, ongoing communication between teacher and animator, home visits; and Phase IV, reporting back. Section B discusses the origins and development of the project in the Eastern Townships School Board. Section C addresses how to become an animator. It covers basic requirements and making home visits. Section D makes recommendations regarding teachers and parents. Appendixes include a list of 29 references for further reading, results of the 1987-88 project, and project materials. (YLB)

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Marion Fear

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INTRODUCTION

The "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" (PaPaL) project is based on the proposition that literacy begins in the home and is further developed at school. It is more particularly based on the recognition that the reverse is true. Illiteracy begins in the home and may be exacerbated by the school system. Adult illiteracy is not a disease that one catches as a grownup, but is rather a condition that develops slowly and painfully during childhood and adolescence. Until, as an adult you try to avoid the written word, bury your frustrations and conceal your inabilities. It is extremely difficult to risk taking another chance on education.

When people who have literacy problems become parents there is the possibility of the cycle of illiteracy continuing. There is also the possibility of using the challenge of parenthood to find the courage to try again. The school system is in an excellent position to facilitate this happening by their dealings with parents and their children.

The longterm goal of PaPaL is to see the atmosphere in schools become so supportive and co-operative that:

1. parents routinely read to their children and listen to them read;
2. school staff are able to encourage parents to improve their own basic skills when that is needed;
3. adult basic education becomes a recognized and accepted part of the school community.

This project has been and is still being developed by the Literacy Program, Adult Education Services of the Eastern Townships School Board in Quebec. It came about because of good communication between school boards within and outside the Province.

Thanks are due to the following people for their help and encouragement:

- Joyce White, Adult Education Services, Ottawa Board;
- Dale Shuttleworth, Board of Education of the Municipality of York;
- Leila Aikin, E.T.S.B.: the first teacher to volunteer to do a project;
- Louise Caron, E.T.S.B., under whom it began;
- Doug Grant, Director of Adult Education Services, E.T.S.B.;
- Tom Matthews, Director of Education Services, E.T.S.B.;
- Ann Gauvin, Regional Animator, Quebec Literacy Working Group;
- Juel Weideman, Executive Director, Laubach Canada.

The guide has been produced under a grant from the National Provincial Literacy program, administered by QLWG. It is a working document which is designed to inspire other people to experiment along the same lines and share their experiences with the author.

One final note of thanks is for Lucie Taylor, who has patiently dealt with the flood of printed materials concerning "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" and who has always been willing and able to type to meet deadlines, this time with the help of Lois Dustin.

SECTION A - OVERVIEW

The Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners project is designed to encourage a love of reading in children and to increase communication between the home and school.

The project consists of several phases initiated by an adult literacy animator in a primary school with the following specific short term goals:

1. To improve the children's reading levels and their attitude toward school in general and reading in particular.

2. To open an avenue to discover illiterate adults and invite them into an educational process.

While a "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project can be done in any of the early elementary grades, it is best started in kindergarten so that children and parents establish or reinforce the habit of reading together from the beginning.

PHASE I - NEGOTIATING WITH THE SCHOOLS

There has been a general lack of attention paid to adult illiteracy by the school system which has resulted in the staff not always understanding the effect this problem has on their work. Parents who are poor or non readers cannot establish a good reading environment. Their children start school at a disadvantage compared to other youngsters where there is a strong reading culture in the home. It is, therefore, important to begin with presentations and discussions on adult literacy and on the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project to the following groups in order to elicit their support and co-operation:

- The Council of Commissioners
- The Director of Education and the Elementary School Principals
- The staff in the school(s)
- The School Committee

Results of previous "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" projects will make the proposal more interesting (see Section B, I-Beginnings, and Annex 1). Teachers have consistently seen an increase in the children's reading levels and a dramatic improvement in the children's attitude towards school and towards reading. Parents who have been frustrated by their own lack of skills have gone back to school.

Phase one ends with a commitment from the teacher(s) to implement a "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project with the backing of the principal and school committee.

PHASE II - DEVELOPING THE PROJECT WITH THE TEACHER(S)

1. Defining Roles

The animator is to be a consultant and aid to the teacher. In order to increase the possibility of success, the project must belong to the teacher. Therefore, it is important that as many decisions as possible be made by him or her. The teacher needs to be reassured that:

- the animator is there to help build bridges between the teacher and the parents of her students, not to disrupt the relationship with them.
- the animator is conscious of the demands made on the teacher to do "just one more job."

2. Planning the Project

The teacher will be asking the students to read to their parents 10-15 minutes a night, 4 nights a week for the length of the project. The teacher will be asking the students' parents to hear their child's reading (or in the case of non readers, read to the child) and initial the reading sheet with their comments. The sheet is to be checked at least once a week. (Annex 2) Note that this is not HOMEWORK reading but reading for pleasure, to help the children become hooked on books.

There are a number of decisions that need to be made at this point.

How long will the project last? Some teachers have chosen to run the project for 4 weeks, two or three times a year. Others have chosen a 6-week period. Some are beginning to make it a part of their program all year long.

Do you want to measure the change in the children's reading level? Most teachers have chosen to use the Slosson Oral Reading Test at the beginning and end of the project. It is important to have a reliable person administer it and that the same person give it each time. Changes in the children's attitudes can be recorded by the teacher as soon as they are noticed.

What books will the children use and who will choose them, the teacher or the student? It is practical to have a library in the classroom which can be augmented by a longterm loan from the school library. If there are not a lot of books this is a good time to make an effort to increase the classroom library making sure it has a variety of reading levels. It will be well used. Most teachers have encouraged the children to choose their own books using the five finger method. They close a finger each time they come to a word they don't know. If all fingers are closed by the end of page one, the book is too hard and they should try another. Since this project is aimed at developing a love of reading, the child's interests should be put first.

How will the books be looked after, both in school and going to and from? The books need to be well organized and easily accessible. One Grade 3 teacher chose a book monitor to check the books in and out. Other teachers do it themselves or have a parent volunteer help with it. Most classes have found it useful to have their reading sheet in a cover with the child's name on it, then it is put in a special bag with the book to be used. Kindergarten children have loved the zip

lock bag that has yellow on one edge and blue on the other. When the bag is closed properly the edge turns green! "Yellow and blue can be seen. Now watch them change to green." Other groups have used cloth bags made by parents but the most practical has been the simple zip lock bag.

When will the reading sheets be checked and who will do it? Some teachers prefer to check the reading sheets themselves and do it every day. Others do it once a week, and often choose Wednesday. By experience, Friday and Monday didn't work out well, since special events or planning days most often occurred on those days, and checking was omitted for that week. If the teacher is feeling too pressured to look after the checking, a volunteer parent needs to be brought in to help. The parent becomes part of the team and an ally in helping the children enjoy reading. This project is to help children enjoy reading and that must be kept in mind when decisions are made. It should not become a heavy chore as homework sometimes does.

What about rewards and celebrations? Many teachers have chosen to recognize when a student has completed 4 nights of reading by giving him a sticker for his reading sheet cover. Some teachers have taken an extra step and made a wall chart of the amount of reading each child has done. This is motivating, but lends itself to competition about the number of books read rather than the enjoyment of reading. What is helpful, is to encourage children to talk with each other about what they read and how they liked it. Presently, a Grade 1 class receives a sticker for every 10 books read. There is a waiting list of up to 11 names for certain books. These children started the project in kindergarten. Some classes have held reading celebrations at the end of a period or project. They have a simple party with a guest reader — perhaps the principal, a school commissioner or the Chairperson of the School Committee. They have juice and cookies and plenty of recognition for all the wonderful reading that has been done - perhaps a pile of all the books that have been read.

How will the parents be told about the project? When the project is initiated in a school it is advisable to invite the parents to a meeting where it can be explained. A date and hour need to be chosen when people are most likely to come. Watch for conflicts with other events. A written invitation (Annexes 3, 4, 5) should be prepared by the teacher keeping it as readable as possible. The parents you most want to attend are poor or non-readers themselves. It is helpful if all parents can be phoned and told that there is going to be a new reading project, that the teacher needs their help, and that they are invited to a meeting to learn about it. The School Committee might be able to help if there is no phoning committee for the class itself. It is advisable to plan the meeting in the classroom or the library and serve light refreshments afterwards so people can chat together.

PHASE III - IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

1. Announcing it to the Class

Although teachers are sometimes tempted to include just the poor readers (and these children are more likely to have poor reading parents), it was soon discovered that all the children want to join in as soon as they know they will be reading to their parents. They will all benefit. It is surprising how many families have lost the habit of reading together. TV is so accessible.

2. The Parent Meeting

The parents need to be welcomed as partners in their children's education. Name tags are useful, and, if it does not already exist, a spirit of co-operation needs to be established between the teacher, the parents and the animator. Helping to arrange the chairs can break the ice and start people working together. It is better not to have everything prepared ahead of time ie. the room arrangement and the set up for refreshments, in order to have some tasks to share.

The meeting is chaired by the teacher who is assisted by the animator in explaining the project. The parents need to understand that they are not being asked to teach their child to read but rather develop the enjoyment of reading. This is a key point because:

- some parents resent being asked to do what they think is the teachers job;
- other parents may kill the child's love of reading by over-teaching.

Suggestions for parents are included in Annexes 6 & 7.

Parents are simply asked to be loving parents and enjoy reading with their children. At this point it would be useful to show the video "Story Time" and use the discussion guide as it is appropriate for that particular group. (Annex 8)

After the discussion is finished, it would be useful for parents to be told:

- if the children are going to be tested;
- if there will be feedback on the project given to the parents - i.e. a second meeting with parents is often held to share results and celebrate together at the end of the project.

The teacher may want to ask for a volunteer to help check the reading sheets and/or help with organizing the books.

The animator needs to have time to talk about the difficulties of parents who don't read well, how common the problem is, and what services are available. Parents can be invited to meet with her afterwards. The animator should be alert to the reactions to her presentation and make herself easily accessible during refreshments. Once "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" projects have become routine in the school, the parent meeting is not so essential. At the beginning it is very important in developing co-operation and works much better than individual discussions on meet the teacher night. The support of the principal for the meeting and the project in general gives them greater credibility.

3. On-going Communication Between Teacher and Animator

It is most helpful with a new project if the animator and teacher can meet regularly to share information. The animator needs to be told of any children who are not participating and which children's parents were not at the parent meeting and should be visited.

The teacher needs to be cheered by the animator and given positive feedback from the home visits made by the animator.

4. **Home Visits**

These are the particular tasks of the animator and require considerable skill and sensitivity. See "Section C - Becoming an Animator", for further discussion.

The purposes of the visits are to:

- explain the new reading project;
- develop a trusting relationship with the parent;
- build a bridge with the school;
- gently explore the parents educational needs and, if appropriate, offer services.

PHASE IV - REPORTING BACK

In order to maintain on-going support, it is important to give feedback on the project, first of all to the students themselves and then to their parents. The latter can be done through a letter (Annex 9) or a meeting.

It is also important to share the results with the people to whom presentations were initially made.

FUNDING

An overview of the project would not be complete without a mention of funding.

While some teachers have initiated a "Parents-as-Partners" projects on their own, it seems to be impossible to turn it into a "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project without the help of an Animator from the Adult Education Services, at least at the beginning. This is what requires the extra funding which has been obtained through special literacy projects. It is to be hoped that, as more schools do it, it will become part of the culture of the schools and parents will be welcomed as Partners and Learners.

SECTION B - ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARENTS-AS-PARTNERS-AS-LEARNERS PROJECT IN THE E.T.S.B.

I - BEGINNINGS

In the Fall of 1986 the part-time literacy animator visited Princess Elizabeth Elementary School and talked to the Principal about the difficulty of reaching out to adults who had basic education problems. His reaction was brief and to the point: "If you want illiterate adults, the parents of many of our students can't read. Find me a project that will reach them and we'll do it."

That exchange precipitated a hunt which led to Joyce White with the Ottawa School Board, who was investigating the idea of "Parents-as-Partners". She had received information from Dale Shuttleworth of the Board of Education for the Borough of York where they had established a "Parents-as-Partners" project based on the research of Hewison and Tizzard in England in the late 1970's. The researchers had studied the relationship between parental involvement and the reading attainment of 7 and 8 year old children and found that the factor which correlated most highly with reading ability was whether or not the mother regularly listened to the child read. The implications of this finding were picked up by the Belfield Community School in Rochdale, Lancashire (England) who developed the Belfield Reading Project. It consisted of asking parents to hear their children read their school reading book for a short time, five days a week, and to keep a record with their comments and initials.

When the idea of parents helping was brought to Canada by Frank McTeague, Co-Ordinator of English for the Board of Education of the City of York, a demonstration project was developed under the title "Parents-as-Partners". It was to respond to the concerns about the low reading levels of students and the high illiteracy rate among their parents.

Both, the Belfield Reading Project and the Parents-as-Partners Project resulted in:

- improved reading test scores;
- greater reading enjoyment;
- better relations between home and school;
- more self confidence on the part of the child;
- the involvement of some parents in adult basic education programs.

It looked like this project could answer to the needs expressed at Princess Elizabeth Elementary School. However, because of the involvement of the adult literacy animator, it was decided to give added emphasis to the parents' educational needs, and so the project name was enlarged to "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners".

A small pilot project was undertaken by a Grade 3 teacher, Mrs. Leila Atkin. Her initial intention was to include 16 children who were having problems with reading; 5 from Grade 2, the remainder from Grade 3. However, once the other Grade 3 children understood what was going on, they all wanted to join in, resulting in a larger group for the project.

The children's parents were asked to help them each night with assigned reading. They were coached by the teacher on how to do this at a special meeting. As well, they were given written instructions. Parents who did not attend the meeting were visited in their homes and given the same instruction by the Literacy Animator.

The observations of the teacher, corroborated those of teachers in similar projects. She reported a significant and sustained improvement in the children's attitude towards reading and towards school.

The reading levels of 23 children were tested before and after the project on the Slosson Oral Reading Test. The average gain was 5.8 months in slightly less than 3 months. The range was from 0 gain (3 children) to 16 months gain (one child).

Through the meetings with the parents, 12 adults were identified as having literacy needs:

- three (3) mothers could not read English as a second language well enough to help their Grade 3 children with homework;
- one (1) English speaking mother could not read well enough to help her Grade 3 child;
- three (3) fathers were poor or non-readers;
- three (3) grandparents could not read;
- two (2) close friends of a family were poor or non-readers.

Of these 12 people, only two welcomed the offer of free, private tutoring. Others were non-committal, while some could not see any reason to want to learn to read.

On the basis of the pilot project and the documentation of the projects in Ontario and England, two schools asked to have the program the following year. Adult Education Services agreed to submit a proposal for funding.

During the school years 87-88 and 88-89 funding was obtained through a number of sources to allow the Literacy Animator to work in Princess Elizabeth Elementary School in Magog and Sunnyside School in Rock Island. Both schools have had a significant percentage of low achieving children with parents who have also had difficulties with school.

The "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project was undertaken in both schools by Grade 3 and was slowly accepted by other teachers in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. Where the children were not reading yet, the parents were asked to read to the children.

The project has consistently shown a dramatic increase in children's oral reading scores, an improvement in their attitude towards school, better home-school relations and increased contacts with illiterate adults. As a direct result, an adult literacy class was set up in each of the 2 schools.

Other schools in the area also tried to use the "Parents-as-Partners" model, without the support of a literacy animator. The results with the children were clear but no contacts were made with parents needing services.

During 1989-90 funding was found for animators to be hired for 14 weeks in the Fall to outreach two new areas of the school board as well as continue with the schools already involved.

The project is becoming part of the culture of the schools where it was started three years ago. This is best exemplified by a Kindergarten teacher who did it with his students then moved with them to Grade I. Parents-as-Partners is simply a normal part of his routine even without a literacy animator to back him up. Other teachers are reaching the same point. The task now is to encourage them to reach out to the "Parents-as-Learners" and invite them to make contact with Adult Education Services.

II - DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

1. Funding

The first problem was, and still is, to have consistent funding for of a literacy animator to initiate and support the project until such time as it becomes self sustaining. The length of time that takes depends on the size and co-operation of the School Board. Fortunately, the publicity surrounding International Literacy Year and Decade are raising the general level of sensitivity to the issues involved, thus making the implementation of a "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project easier. Based on the experience at Eastern Townships School Board where there has been erratic funding obtained over a three-year period, school boards seriously wishing to set up "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" should seek funding for at least a three-year period and identify an advocate at the administration level.

2. Teachers

It was hard for teachers to become involved with the project for a number of reasons:

a) some teachers, while comfortable in meeting parents on a one-to-one basis were unwilling to have a parent meeting. They felt intimidated by the thought of meeting a group of parents.

b) some teachers expressed a lack of empathy in dealing with illiterate parents.

c) some teachers questioned the idea of reaching illiterate adults through their children.

d) most teachers had had no training in:
   - dealing with parents;
   - understanding the broad area of illiteracy, particularly the cyclical nature of it.

e) most teachers have apparently ever expanding demands on their time and energy.

The co-operation of teachers, in spite of these factors was remarkable and greatly appreciated.

3. **Families**

There were a number of observations made regarding families who would participate minimally or not at all:

a) many parents were preoccupied by economic instability. If they were able to get work it was usually low paying and subject to lay offs. Moving back and forth between wages, UIC and/or Social Assistance is complicated and stressful for poorly educated adults.

b) some parents had inadequate parenting skills, largely because of the parenting they had received, and had not acquired basic knowledge of child care and development ie. a grandmother was heard talking to her 12 month old grandson;:"You bad, bad boy. You can't walk. You can't talk. You're bad."

These first two factors combined to produce c and d

c) parents were often preoccupied with ill health due to poor health habits and/or poor nutrition and/or poor housing conditions.

d) families often had no phone making it difficult to communicate with them and they moved frequently, always in search of a better place. Even though the move might be within a 50 mile radius, it usually would mean a break in all the support services that had been developed and a disruption of the child's school. One family had moved 10 times between the time their 3rd child was born and when he reached his 3rd birthday.

e) like all illiterate adults, parents who have poor basic academic skills are extremely sensitive and have often been badly hurt by the school system. It is very difficult for them to communicate with school officials. In some cases there were families where poorly achieving children were attending the same school where their parent(s) had failed. Some of the same staff were still in place.

III - SPIN-OFFS

In spite of the difficulties not only has the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project begun to take root but it has also resulted in a few spin-offs.

1. By working with the Young Volunteers Program it was possible to encourage the development of a **Play Group and Preschool**, for English speaking children in Magog. It had been hoped that some of the more disadvantaged families would take part but that has only just begun to happen.

2. Attention has begun to be focused on the importance of **clear written communication** to parents so that as many as possible will be able to understand the message. Examples of identified problems have been:
   - principals letter on school safety;
   - special diet to avoid hyperactive behaviour in the child;
   - directions for home speech therapy.

Negotiations are under way with Frontier College to produce a "Clear Lines" workshop adapted to this particular need.

3. Funding has now been obtained by the District of Bedford Regional School Board to replicate the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project in their area and a grant has also been obtained to conduct a small research project to focus on:
   - an evaluation of the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project;
   - collecting information on illiteracy in English families in the Eastern Townships.

   Reports on these projects are expected to be available in June 1991.

4. During the work on the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project, it became clear that there were certain communities where there were a significant number of English speaking families who experienced multiple problems, including illiteracy. Arising out of that observation an initiative has begun to develop an integrated, primary prevention project in one area.

SECTION C - BECOMING AN ANIMATOR

I - BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The animators role in a "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project is a wonderfully challenging job. It demands:

1. Knowledge of adult and beginning literacy as well as a knowledge of the community itself. This does not mean one must be an expert in these three areas but rather have a good foundation and a willingness to continue learning (see list of readings).

2. a) Skills in dealing with people in general and specifically skills in negotiation. That means being able to hear the other person's position and be willing to work out compromises. For example, if there was no one at home who could hear a child read, a substitute was found, sometimes in the school, sometimes in the community.

   b) Skills in presenting, either verbally or in written form. Rather than just lecturing, it is helpful in the initial presentations to develop good examples of the points you want to make or exercises which will help people understand. For example, asking people to read sentences with two or more heteronyms in them is a good exercise in discovering the frustration a poor reader experiences. (See Annex 10)

3. Helpful ways of relating to people not just as consciously used techniques but rather as expressions of your attitudes and feelings. Relating to both the teachers and the parents with respect, empathy, warmth and genuineness will promote the development of relationships which will allow all participants to grow and co-operate. These characteristic's and others are well described in Jacquelyn Small's book Becoming Naturally Therapeutic: A Return to the True Essence of Helping. The sections on using the characteristics in every day life are particularly useful.

II - MAKING HOME VISITS

Visiting families is perhaps the most sensitive, important and difficult task. It is difficult because you are reaching out to people who have not yet decided they want to improve their literacy skills or have even realized they need to do so.

The key that has always opened the door is to announce that the school is doing a new reading program and could you come and tell them about it. Most parents are concerned about their children and want them to have better experiences than they have had.

Setting up appointments when parents have a phone, is made easier if you can inform yourself ahead of time of holiday or planning days when children will be at home. It is easier for parents to talk if they are not distracted by other demands. It is also wise to discover which dates the welfare cheques arrive and which are the usual shopping days in the community. People have their own routine which it is better to respect if you want them to be there when you arrive.

If you have not been able to make an appointment in advance because there is no phone then it is useful to time your visit to about one hour before the child(ren) is (are) due to arrive home from school.

If you have established a co-operative arrangement with the school you should have been able to obtain class lists with addresses and phone numbers as well as the school schedules. It is easier to communicate with teachers if you can be present at coffee break or lunch time. Dismissal time in the afternoon is a good time to chat with parents who come to pick up their children.

Once you are in a home, the first goal is to put the parent and yourself at ease. This means socializing. People in rural areas usually want to know where you live, who you are related to in the area or who your neighbours are so they can place you. It also means accepting hospitality in the form of tea or coffee. This may seem difficult in a very poor home but it is a gesture of mutual acceptance to accept such an offer graciously.

Once you have begun to establish a rapport you can explain about the project and what the parent is expected to do. At that point it is useful if you can bring a positive message from the school. For example "yes you're right Mrs._____ does give a fair amount of homework. She really cares about her students and wants them to learn. If you have any questions, I'm sure she would be glad to talk to you. Just leave a message with the school secretary." That kind of intervention helps to build bridges between the home and school.

The animator also needs to clarify her role with the parent: she is there to help the parent help the child and to explain services available to the parent ie. private tutoring or Adult Basic Education classes. The development of a trusting relationship between the parent and the animator makes it easier for parents to begin looking at the possibility of upgrading their own skills. It is such a difficult step for some people to take because of the wounds they have received in the school system, they may never be able to take a second chance. Others may use the support of the animator and transfer the trust developed with that relationship to a tutor or teacher. The animator may have to accompany the parent to the class the first time. It is hard for literate adults to comprehend how difficult that step is to take. Perhaps it would allow the animator to feel more empathy for the parent if he/she were to try to remember a particularly difficult, even terrifying task he/she had undertaken at sometime in his/her life.

Another good exercise for animators is to try to remember occasions when they felt diminished or enhanced as human beings. How did that happen? What made you feel that way? Was it the words someone used, their tone of voice, their body language or the expression on their face? One woman complained of a professional who would come to visit her and always inspect the apartment with her eyes as they were talking. It made for an uncomfortable meeting each time.

There is always a range of experiences from the occasional person who has been trying to get up the courage to go back to school to people who have accommodated to their lack of basic academic skills so well they see no need to learn to read. An animator has to respect each one and be present to their reality.

The animator can also expand the parents' awareness of community services and how to link up with them: i.e. local libraries; special programs in health and social services such as "at risk pregnant women" and counselling.

Learning by observing your own and others reactions is an avenue open to everyone. When this is done in conjunction with guiding principles it becomes more effective. In the animator-parent relationship you are working towards a trusting relationship between adults who both care about the next generation.

SECTION D - VISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If we truly wish to become a more literate society, the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project clearly points to a number of specific recommendations regarding parents and teachers:

1. At the time of registering their child for Kindergarten, all parents should be told what is expected of them as a partner in their child's education and what is available to them as support services through the school or Adult Education Services.

2. Teacher preparation programs should include information on illiteracy and training in dealing with parents.

3. School Board Policy could move towards stating that Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers will be requested to invite the parents of their students to hear their child read or read to them regularly in order to help them develop a love of reading.

ORDERING INFORMATION

Please write to: Adult Education Services
2365 Galt Street West
Sherbrooke, Qc J1K 1L1

Presently available: – **Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners Guide**
– "STORY TIME" 5-minute VHS Video on reading to children

In production: – Video: Meeting Parents as Learners

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ANNEX 1

RESULTS OF THE 1987-1988 PROJECT

Both, parents and teachers, reported improved attitudes towards school and reading. At the end of the one-month project in Kindergarten or School #1, a little boy said "I can't stop now. I haven't learned to read yet."

The teachers were particularly enthusiastic about the closer relationship with parents and having someone who could make the link with the homes by visiting. Many of the families are poor and have no phones or are away at work all day and difficult to reach.

Efforts were made to have the Slosson Oral Reading Test done before and after the Project on each of the Grade 3's. Unfortunately, the testing in School #2 was done by untrained parents and by different parents before and after. The results proved to be invalid.

Reliable results were obtained on the Grade 3 in School #1 and on a smaller Grade 3 (part of a Grade 3 & 4 class) in another school where they were using the "Parents-as-Partners" Project.

For the 21 children in Grade 3 of School #1 the average gain was 7.7 months during the Project which lasted four months and three weeks. The range was from 0 to 15 months gain. The one child who did not gain was already at a Grade 5.8 level. Those who were already functioning better improved more.

In the other school, 14 children in Grade 3 participated in a "Parents-as-Partners" Project for three months. They too were tested before and after with the Sloson Oral Reading Test. The students made an average gain of 9.5 months with a range from 2 to 19 months.

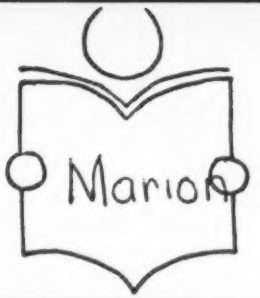
The significant difference in average gain (9.5 months gain in 3 months as opposed to 7.7 months in 4 months and 3 weeks) can be accounted for by the greater proportion of better functioning children. The average grade level of the Grade 3 students of School #I on the pretest was 3.2. Their teacher described the class as having many problems: many repeaters, children with English as a second language and discipline problems. While the 14 children in the other Grade 3 class had some repeaters and a few problems, they were described as being one of the best classes in the school. Their average grade level on the pretest was 3.6.

Although the "Parents-as-Partners" project had good results with the children, no illiterate adults were found through this project. It was only where there was the presence of an Adult Literacy Animator that adult literacy students were found.

After 6.5 months of the "Parents-as-Partners-as-Learners" project, 35 adults have identified themselves to the animator as having problems with either reading, writing or arithmetic. Two of these adults are still trying to find the courage to ask for help. The other 33 have all begun to take advantage of the educational programs available to them: an Adult Basic Education class with a qualified teacher or individualized work with a trained, volunteer tutor from the St. Francis Literacy Council.

Ten adults are friends or relatives of the parents in the Project. The other 25 of the 35 adults who came forward are parents. Six of these are parents of preschool children who heard about the project through friends. The remaining 19 adults are parents of children, all of whom have been doing poorly in school.

Eleven of the 35 adults belong to the same extended family. Two other families with frequent literacy problems were also identified. Several children who are having difficultly learning to read not only have parents with literacy problems but often grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins as well who have had trouble learning in school. Most of the families were living in poor circumstances.



Ecole Élémentaire Princesse Elizabeth
Princess Elizabeth Elementary School

Home Reading Assignment Record

Date	Title	From Page	To Page	Parent's Initials • Comments

ANNEX 2

ANNEX 3

March 13, 1989

Dear Parents,

You are invited to attend a very important class meeting on Wednesday, March 29 at 7:00 pm in the Kindergarten classroom..

We already started to think about next year and have a project which will help prepare your child for the reading in Grade 1. We would like to introduce you to a program called « Parents as Partners ». Marion Fear will be with us to answer questions about this program and literacy.

We are counting on you!

Julie Soranger Beryl Beckwith

Please have your child return this part

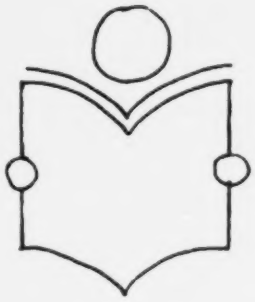
☐ will attend
☐ am unable to attend
☐ would like more information

_____

signature

ANNEX 4

March 28, 1989



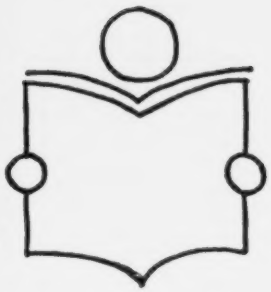
Dear Parents,

We would like to remind you that tomorrow night, at 7:00 pm, we will be waiting for you in the French kindergarten class room to discuss the project « Parents as Partners ».

Looking for seeing you!

Julie Lounger

Beryl Beckwith



April 3rd, 1989

Dear Parents,

Since all the parents did not attend the meeting for the project « Parents as Partners », we would like to inform you about it.

Starting today your child will bring home a bag with a book and a record sheet. We would like you to read the book to your child and fill in the record sheet. Your child must bring back his/her bag every day, so we can change the book.

This project will be for the month of April. If you have any more questions, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for your cooperation and let's be Partners!

Julie Granger.
Beryl Beckwett

READING AND RETELLING AT HOME

SOME DO'S AND DON'T'S FOR PARENTS

Reading Aloud

DO	DON'T
1. Try to make it a pleasant routine for your child.	1. Don't make it a big deal. Never use pressure or force and don't worry.
2. Try to do it at the same time and place each day.	2. Don't bother if some upset occurs or if your child is not well. There's always tomorrow.
3. Use a positive approach. Say, 'I know you can do it', or 'It's o.k., you are really trying to get the hang of it.'	3. Never call you child stupid or get upset at him or her.
4. Remember progress may seem to be slow. Sometimes your child will spurt ahead and at other times fall back a little.	4. Don't worry about mistakes, no matter how simple they seem. They are quite natural, so expect them to happen. Reading aloud causes everyone to make mistakes.
5. It's easier for your child 'to get the hang of it' than it is to get it perfect. It's better to get the drift of the whole story than to get each word right.	5. Don't force the child to get it right. This will only increase pressure and make it more difficult. It's okay to say 'house' for 'home' or 'was' for 'saw'. These are common problems.
6. If your child can't get started, you may start by reading aloud the first few sentences. Or you may read a part of a sentence and let him or her finish.	6. Don't feel that your child is going too slow. Don't try to push ahead too fast.
7. Let him point with his finger if it helps. Let him use his left hand if it is natural for him.	7. Don't worry if he is pointing with his finger to help his eyes. Don't force him to use his right hand, if he is left handed.
8. Be a source of information and help for your child. Try to make reading easy to do.	8. Don't play 'teacher' by pointing to letters or words on the page and ask your child to say them.
If you speak a language other than English, you probably know enough English to make sure your child is making sense. If not, you might ask a neighbour or relative to help out.	9. Don't worry if you speak another language at home. Many children in our schools are bilingual and having a second or even a third language is quite natural for them.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS: READING AND RETELLING AT HOME

GENERAL DO's

1. Make it fun - for both of you!
2. Set aside a regular time for reading - but don't force it.
3. Keep the sessions short, no more than 15 - 30 minutes, depending on age and interest of the child.
4. Give lots of praise, by look and words.

SPECIFIC WAYS TO HELP WHEN READING WITH YOUR CHILD

1. To prepare your child for reading a passage
   a) ask him/her to get information from title and pictures
   b) ask the child to predict what the passage is about.
2. When your child is stuck on a word
   DON'T a) read it for him/her immediately
   b) make him/her sound it out
   DO a) ask him/her to skip it, read to the end of sentence, then go back and re-read the sentence
   b) ask questions, first sound?, small words within the word?, where would he put it?, what did he have?, etc.
   c) read the word for your child if he/she can't get it.
3. When your child misreads a word
   a) if the error makes sense, accept it (sawed for seen,) (toy for truck)
   b) if the error changes the meaning, but not in an important way, accept it, (e.g. pasted up for picked up)
   c) if the error doesn't make sense, ask --"Does that make sense?"

Remember: Avoid giving your child the impression that he/she must read word perfectly. The meaning is what is important. Learning to read is much like learning to speak - a case of trial and error, and gradual improvement.

4. Read a little yourself to your child, if you can, to make it more fun for both of you.
5. Check for understanding by having your child re-tell the story at the end. You can prompt your child's memory by asking a few questions such as:

   What else happened?
   Who else was in the story?
   Do you remember the part about.....
   Questions beginning with words like where, when, how or why are also useful at times.

"STORY TIME" DISCUSSION GUIDE

To be effective, any group discussion needs to be tailored to the particular group and to the purpose you want to achieve.

With that in mind, before viewing **"Story Time"**, it would be useful to start with a brief discussion that would help you orient yourself to the experiences and attitudes of the group. It could be started by questions like these:

1. What do you remember about being read to as a child?
   — pleasure;
   — learning to read.
2. How important was that to you?
3. What were your favorite books, characters, ideas, memories?
4. How do you like to read to your children?
5. When do you like to read to your children?
6. Why do you read to your children?
7. Why don't you read to your children?

After a few minutes of such a discussion, you might introduce the video by saying: "This is a beautiful little film showing ordinary people reading a story to children they love. There are no professional actors or actresses in it.

Each person always sees different things. Let's look at it: afterwards, we can compare notes, and then see it again. It's only five minutes and forty-five seconds long."

Viewing

2nd Discussion

1. Were you caught-up in the story that was being read?

2. How did you enjoy it?
   — a bit difficult at the beginning;
   — audio a bit confusing;
   — nice ending.

3. Did you hear the girls tell their mother "Again!"?

4. What did you see?
   — Elicit comments, and during the second viewing, suggest to watch for:

   a) Mohawk mother turning off the TV, then calling the children for a story.

   b) People of different races and ages all enjoying reading to children:
   — grandfather reading in Mohawk;
   — black mother and daughter reading together. Mother is a new reader but it is obviously a pleasurable experience for them. How do you think her daughter feels about her mother's reading?
   — mother reading to her daughters and unborn baby. This could lead to a discussion about early stimulation;
   — a young girl reading to her brother — how children try out grown-up roles.

   c) The difference in the younger and older children's attention to the story.

   d) The close contact between the readers and the listeners.

2nd Viewing

3rd Discussion

"You were probably less caught-up in the story this time. Did you see anything we talked about before?"

Important points to bring out in the final discussion, if they have not already been well covered:

1. Reading to children is a **pleasure** for both the reader and the listener(s), even when the reader is not an expert.
2. Reading to children helps to build that close loving feeling between adults and children.
3. Being read to by someone who loves you helps you to begin to enjoy reading.
4. Children need help in learning to focus and increase their attention span. It makes it easier for them to do this if other distractions are eliminated when they are having a story. The TV and/or the radio should be turned off.
5. Children will listen more attentively to a story if it is suitable for them i.e. their interest, age, level, etc.
6. What you are aiming for is to have a child become involved in the story, first of all for the sheer pleasure of it, and secondly to increase their thinking skills, thus preparing them for learning to read.

   This latter can be done by occasional, friendly questions (**not** a cross examination) such as: What do you think is going to happen next? Have you seen that word before? What's the name of the little boy? Has anything like that ever happened to you? How did you like the story?

May 1st, 1989

Dear Parents as Partners,

THANK YOU

for your cooperation on the project which finishes today.

Your participation was very much appreciated and as a result, we noticed a change in the attitude and the interest of the children toward the books. We have only positive comments about it.

We would like now to share with you an article on this subject that was brought to our attention by one of the student's parent, Mrs Mary Accarion. It felt good to see and read that what we were doing was worth it.

Yours truly,

Julie Granger

Brigitte Duchesne

F O R S A L E:

Toggenburg does ready to kid this spring.

Comment: Country wise readers will understand that this ad means there are female goats for sale, who will produce young in the spring.